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ABSTRACT

This workshop presenter's guide is intended for use by administrators in training one another in the Project Leadership program developed by the Association of California School Administrators (ACSA). The purposes of the guide are: to provide administrators with a framework for deciding when others (particularly subordinates) should participate in the decision-making process; and to help administrators obtain high quality solutions to problems that are acceptable to subordinates, if acceptability of solutions is important for effective implementation. A case study method is used, whereby a problem is presented, and suggested discussion topics and participant activities are given. The problems are diagnosed keeping in mind the four alternative decision-making styles: (1) autocratic; (2) consultative; (3) group; and (4) delegated. Research evidence emphasizing the importance of effective decision-making is presented. Administrators are encouraged to promote participative decision-making in schools, but only in areas in which teachers will want input, relevance, expertise, and jurisdiction. The guide contains an 8-item reference list, 7 handouts, 10 masters of numbered transparencies for use in the sessions, and a suggested reading list. (AA)

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Deciding How to Decide: Decision Making in Schools

A Presenter's Guide

Research Based Training for School Administrators

Center for Educational Policy

and Management

College of Education
University of Oregon
Eugene, Oregon 97403

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Deciding How to Decide:
Decision Making in Schools

PROJECT LEADERSHIP PRESENTER'S GUIDE

Prepared by the Research-Based Training for School Administrators Project

Published by the Center for Educational Policy and Management,
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Revised 1983

Permission was secured to reproduce sections of the following:

Kanter, Rosabeth Moss. The Change Masters: Innovation for Productivity in the American Corporation. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1983.

"Participative Decision Making." ERIC Research Action Brief, No. 2, July 1977.

Vroom, Victor, and Yetton, Paul. Leadership and Decision Making. Pittsburg: University Press, 1973.

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A training model called Project Leadership developed by the Association of California School Administrators (ACSA) and directed by James Olivero was selected as a vehicle for the purpose of disseminating research and state-of-the-art materials to school administrators. Project Leadership is built upon two key ideas: networking and administrators training one another using scripted workshop materials called Presenter's Guides. This is a Presenter's Guide developed by the team at the Center for Educational Policy and Management (CEPM).

All members of our team at CEPM have contributed in some way to this material. They include William Auty, Ray Embry, Nancy Isaacson, Martha Landry, Scott Lane, Max Riley, and Hugh Watson. We are grateful to Debbie Rauch for her clerical assistance.

And finally, we are grateful to A. Lorri Manasse, Project Officer at the National Institute of Education; to James Olivero and James Slezak of the Association of California School Administrators; to Bert Simmons and Ozzie Rose of the Confederation of Oregon School Administrators; and to William Lahmann and Howard Coble of the Washington Association of School Administrators. There people contributed greatly in promoting and developing Project Leadership in Oregon and Washington.

USING THE GUIDE

The guide is written so that it can be read aloud, but we believe you will want to make changes and provide your own examples. You should adapt the material to your personal needs and the needs of your audience.

You are equipped with the Presenter's Guide, which contains a script and suggestions for the conduct of the session (in talics). In the back you will find the following: (1) a reference list of the sources cited or referred to in the text, (2) handouts, and (3) masters of numbered transparencies that have been designed to give visual emphasis to the main points of your presentation. Finally, the package includes a suggested reading list for you that is designed to augment the content of the packet and aid you in preparing for your presentation.

PRIOR TO THE WORKSHOP

1. Review guide -- the script, transparency masters, and handout materials -- prior to the workshop.
2. Prepare copies of handout materials for each participant.
3. Prepare transparencies from the "masters." These are especially appealing when colors are added.
4. Arrange for meeting room facilities: Ideally, the facilities will offer places for participants to write as well as areas for breaking up into small groups.
5. Arrange to have an overhead projector, screen, three-prong adapter and extension cord at the meeting room. Insure that the room is equipped with a chalkboard or flipchart visible to all participants.
6. Arrange for coffee or other refreshments, if desirable.

TO THE PRESENTER

The purpose of this guide is to provide administrators with a framework for deciding when others should participate in the decision making process. Participation suggests the delegation of some decision-making and advice-giving prerogatives to subordinates, generally as a group. A wide range of policies and practices are offered under the label of participation including employee opinion surveys, representative councils, or job enrichment.

Using delegation to the group as a central theme in participation, we can identify some important dilemmas surrounding it (Kanter 1983). Ther are trade-offs involved in all of the so-called participatory mechanisms. These dilemmas help us to draw conclusions about the conditions that make participation work for a school building or district and for its people.

As presenter you should be aware of these dilemmas as they are likely to come up during the presentation. These dilemmas include:

1. The need for visible results. *(People like to see the results of their efforts.)*
2. The problem of power. *(Leaders often do not want to share power. Many people regard power as a finite quantity, a pie to be divided up.)*
3. Time. *(Commuter decisions take longer than the leader deciding alone.)*
4. The question of voluntary participation. *(Must everyone participate? Should committees be appointed?)*
5. The knowledge gap. *(Often subordinates don't have the necessary information to make the decision.)*
6. The "big decision" trap. *(Everyone wants to make the big decisions and not the little ones that run the school.)*

7. The non-democratic nature of innovation. *(New ideas may not come out of committee but the creative genius of one individual.)*
8. The fixed decision problem. *(People often want to expand the focus of the committee.)*
9. Delegation does not mean abdication. *(Administrators should not give up their control of the process; it may need careful monitoring.) (Kanter 1983)*

Be familiar with these dilemmas, perhaps getting participants to elaborate on specific points, providing relevant examples.

OUTLINE

1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Discussion
- 1.2 Objectives of workshop
- 1.3 Activity
- 1.4 Research evidence

2.0 DECISION MAKING MODEL

- 2.1 Decision effectiveness: Quality, acceptance, time
- 2.2 Problem attributes
- 2.3 Decision tree
- 2.4 Activity

3.0 PARTICIPATIVE DECISION MAKING IN SCHOOLS

- 3.1 When others should participate
- 3.2 Activity

4.0 REVIEW

LEADERSHIP AND DECISION-MAKING

1.0 INTRODUCTION

This workshop is intended to help administrators meet two criteria of effective problem-solving. As administrators you must (1) seek high quality solutions to problems and (2) obtain solutions that are acceptable to subordinates, if acceptability of solutions is important for effective implementation.

Let's consider how decisions are made

SHOW TRANSPARENCY #1

Decisions may be made by...

- Person with the higher power and authority.
- Person whose job description carries the responsibility.
- Persons with most knowledge and expertise about the problem.
- Persons most personally involved and affected by the outcome.

1.1 Today we will show that there is no one best way of making decisions. It is appropriate to be autocratic on some occasions, consult another person in other situations, or on still other occasions let the group decide. We will discuss decision-making and more specifically, how much and in what way to involve subordinates in decision making. Leadership style will influence how decisions are likely to be made. We will examine the fit between the decision situation and leadership style. We will suggest that you need a variety of styles to be an effective manager.

Let's consider an example to illustrate this connection between leadership and decision-making. Assume that you are a superintendent who has two assistant superintendents and one director of staff development reporting to you. Each of these subordinates has a clearly defined and distinct set of responsibilities. The director of staff development resigns to take the position of assistant superintendent in a smaller district in the eastern part of the state. Due to a cost-cutting program including a reduction-in-force policy recently initiated by you and the board of education making it impossible to hire new employees, you cannot replace her. It will be necessary for you to find some way of reallocating the departing director's responsibilities between the two assistant superintendents in such a way as to maintain the present workload and effectiveness of the district's central office staff.

Is this kind of situation representative for some of you? There is a need for action--a problem exists and a solution or decision must be made. You, as leader, have some area of freedom or discretion. While there are a number of possible ways in which the work can be reallocated, there are some constraints on your actions.

DISCUSSION:

Ask participants to identify the constraints; you should fill in where they don't supply the answers. The constraints include: (1) you cannot solve the problem by hiring someone from outside the organization, (2) furthermore, the solution adopted is going to have effects on people other than yourself, and (3) your subordinates are going to have to carry out whatever decision is reached.

How are you going to make this decision?

1.2 *DISCUSSION:*

Ask participants to tell how (not what) they would decide. You should fill in with all of the options available to them if they do not identify them. The possible decision-making processes that could be employed are: (1) you could make the decision by yourself and announce it to your subordinates; (2) you could obtain additional information from your subordinates and then make the decision; (3) you could consult with them either individually or collectively before making the decision; or (4) you could meet as a group, share the problem, and attempt to reach agreement on a solution to the problem. (Vroom & Yetton 1973)

How do these options vary from one another?

Get participant responses, if possible. They vary in the amount and form of opportunity given to subordinates to participate in the decision.

Today we will examine participation by subordinates in the problem solving and decision-making processes. Many argue that those responsible for implementation should have the greater influence in decision making. For example, during a recent teachers' strike, principals argued that they should be involved in central office decisions regarding strike plans, procedures, and settlement. After all, they had to execute the contract and come face to face with the teachers during and after the strike.

How much and what kind of participation should there be in decision-making and problem solving? What are the effects of participation on the participants, on the quality of the decision, and on the organization? In considering participative decision making today, we will present a model that helps you decide how to make decision about how to:

1. determine whether others should influence and participate in the decision process.
2. involve subordinates.

Many of you will have attempted to involve your subordinates in decision-making. How does it work? Is it effective? What problem or successes have you had?

1.3 *ACTIVITY:*

Have participants identify their experience with participative decision making. Build a list. Write descriptions on newsprint. Participants may identify such things as: "it takes longer to make a decision," "my teachers aren't interested because they think I won't listen to them," "the quality of the decision is higher," "people are more likely to follow the decision," "my teachers say it's my job to make decisions." Write down as many impressions as you can in 15 minutes. Do not judge the responses. Ask participants not to judge others' responses at this stage. The purpose of this activity is to ground the presentation in the participants' experiences.

Now that we know your reactions to participative decision making (PDM), what are the claims often made about PDM?

SHOW TRANSPARENCY #2

1. PDM promotes better decisions and their more effective implementation.
2. PDM promotes increased satisfaction with the school organization.
3. PDM will increase commitment to the success of a decision.
4. PDM takes more time (it is slower to reach a decision and more participant time is consumed). (ERIC Research Action Brief, No. 2 July 1977 "Participative Decision Making")
5. PDM improves communication.
6. PDM improves staff morale.

Can we find any evidence for these claims in the research?

1.4 Research Evidence (This summary is taken from the ERIC Research Action Brief No. 2, July 1977, "Participative Decision Making.")

1. Broader participation in decision-making can promote more effective decisions. If arriving at the most effective decision is the primary goal, the involvement of several people will provide better results than the "one-person-deciding-alone" modle. (Piper 1974)
2. Teachers desire greater participation in some problems (decision opportunities) than in others. The type of decision being made may, therefore, influence how much teachers want to be involved. Teachers prefer that principals and department heads have less direct control over curriculum-related areas. (Knoop and O'Reilly 1975)
3. Groups reaching decisions by consensus, showed the highest level of satisfaction with the group solution. Consensus does not appear to work well in groups of more than twenty-five. With larger groups, it is more effective for the leader to make decisions after consulting with the groups. (Lowell 1972)
4. Teachers who participate in making fewer decisions than they would like, tend to be more militant than other teachers. (Alutto and Belasco 1972)

5. Participation does not necessarily increase teacher commitment to the school. (Alutto and Belasco 1972)
6. Increasing decisional participation across the board can be harmful in that it can create dissatisfaction among teachers. (Alutto and Belasco 1972)
7. Increased satisfaction is more often a guaranteed result of PDM than increased performance; satisfaction and performance are not always related.
8. PDM is time consuming; it generally takes longer to make decisions democratically rather than autocratically.

Read the ERIC Research Action Brief to get more detail about the research studies.

2.0 DECISION MAKING MODEL - *The following section is based on a decision making making model developed by Vroom and Yetton (1973).*

The model we will examine today will help you diagnose a particular problem before choosing your method of leadership. Only in a few types of problems is there one best way for making a decision. As we have already mentioned, there are several ways in which problems can be solved or decisions made. In this model, decision making methods are represented by sumbols.

SHOW TRANSPARENCY #3

We'll use these symbols as a convenient shorthand for referring to each method. The letters signify the basic properties of the method.

SHOW TRANSPARENCY #4

A stands for autocratic

C stands for consultative

G stands for group

D stands for delegated

The numbers that follow the letters signify variations of that method. Thus, AI represents the first variation on the autocratic method, AII, the second variation; and so on. You see, there's more than one way to be autocratic. In fact we will have 7 methods of decision-making from which to choose (2 autocratic, 2 consultative, 2 group, and 1 delegated).

SHOW TRANSPARENCY #5

DISTRIBUTE HANDOUT #1

These methods are arranged in two columns, which correspond to the applicability to a group or an individual.

If a problem clearly affects only one subordinate, you should choose among methods in the right-hand column. If a problem has potential effects on more than one subordinate, choose among the methods shown in the left-hand column.

Be familiar with the content and go over the decision methods in both columns.

The distinction between group and individual problems can be illustrated by the following examples.

You may choose to pose the following problems in a scrambled order and ask participants if each is a group or individual problem.

GROUP PROBLEMS

1. The recent failure of a needed tax levy and declining enrollment has resulted in a directive from the superintendent that makes it impossible to take on any new personnel even to replace those who leave. Shortly after this directive is issued, one of your math

teachers resigns mid-year. Your problem is how to rearrange the departing teacher's workload among the remaining four math teachers.

2. The school board has directed you to implement a sex education program. Your problem is that a text needs to be chosen.

INDIVIDUAL PROBLEMS

3. As principal of a high school, you often handle severe disciplinary cases. Over the last three months, Mr. Apple has referred to a large number of cases to your attention, often minor violations of the discipline code. This fact, combined with student and parent complaints you have received leads to you to question if there is a breakdown of discipline within Apple's classroom.

4. The costs for long distance telephone service for department A have risen faster than the other departments under your direction. The director of department A is your immediate subordinate.

5. You are holding a retirement dinner for a high school principal at a restaurant in your community. Some of the people attending the dinner have asked the waiter if they may purchase wine from the wine list (at the district's expense). The waiter has come to you (superintendent) with the question.

Let's refer back to the handout that identifies methods of decision-making. The leader could presumably employ any of the options on the left-hand side for the group problems and any one of the options on the

right-hand side for the individual problems. Can you see why certain methods for solving problems or making decisions are excluded from individual problems or group problems?

You may at this point refer back to the retirement dinner example and suggest that the problem be shared with the group, obtaining all of their ideas and suggestions, before making the decision.

Well, with the seven methods identified, how do you decide which one is applicable to the situation? A decision-making method that is optimal for the quarterback on a football team making decisions under severe time constraints is likely to be far from optimal when used by a principal introducing a new curriculum.

2.1 We must find a way for determining which leadership style and decision-making method would be most effective. The effectiveness of a decision is based on three factors.

1. The quality of rationality of the decision.
2. The acceptance of the decision by subordinates and their commitment to execute it effectively.
3. The amount of time required to make the decision. (Vroom and Yetton 1973, p.20)

SHOW TRANSPARENCY #6
QUALITY, ACCEPTANCE, TIME

We noted the evidence regarding the effects of participation on each of these factors earlier in the workshop.

2.2 This model identifies eight problem attributes, expressed in the form of questions, that might be used by a leader in diagnosing a particular problem before choosing his/her leadership style.

SHOW TRANSPARENCY #7

PROBLEM ATTRIBUTES

DISTRIBUTE HANDOUT #2

Read Each Question

A. Does the problem possess a quality requirement? (One quality might be time: is this a decision that must be made now, with no time to consult others? Other quality factors might be the desirability of stimulating team development or keeping people informed through participation).

B. Do I have sufficient information to make a high quality decision?

C. Do subordinates have sufficient additional information to contribute to a high quality decision?

D. Do I know exactly what information is needed, who possesses it, and how to collect it?

E. Is acceptance of the decision by subordinates critical to effective implementation?

F. If I were to make the decision by myself, is it certain that it would be accepted by my subordinates?

G. Can subordinates be trusted to base solutions on organizational considerations?

H. Is conflict among subordinates likely in preferred solutions? (Vroom & Yetton 1973, p. 31)

The questions are written so that you answer either yes or no to them. For example, instead of attempting to determine how important the decision quality is to the effectiveness of the decision (attribute A) you are asked to judge whether there is any quality component to the problem.

Similarly, the difficult task of specifying exactly how much information the leader possesses, that is relevant to the decision (attribute B) is reduced to a simple judgment concerning whether you have sufficient information to make a high quality decision.

It has been found that managers can diagnose a situation quickly and accurately by answering this set of eight questions. But how can such responses generate a prescription for the most effective method of decision making?

The framework for decision-making built from this set of problem attributes will be taken up next.

SHOW TRANSPARENCY #8

DISTRIBUTE HANDOUT #3

Demonstrate how you would proceed through the decision tree. Use one of the examples presented earlier and make up your own example.

2.3 By answering the eight attribute questions you proceed through the decision tree and arrive at a problem type (1, 2, 3, 4,...14). For each problem type there is a feasible set of methods of decision-making.

SHOW TRANSPARENCY #9

DISTRIBUTE HANDOUT #4

The feasible set is defined as the methods remaining after all those have been excluded that violate rules designed to protect the quality and acceptance of the decision. When more than one method is in the feasible set, you should base your decision on the number of person

hours required to solve the problem. (Vroom & Yetton 1973)

Two other attribute questions are added to cover situations in which the group does not have sufficient information to make a decision. The attributes regulate predecisional activities like problem identification and prior information collection if this question arises. These are attribute questions B and C.

2.4 To illustrate how the model might be applied to actual administrative decisions, let's analyze some cases using the model.

DISTRIBUTE HANDOUT #5

Direct participants to divide into groups of 2. Select a case to be used by the dyad from Handout #5 and distribute copies of the selected cases to all participants. (15-20 minutes).

Case Study #1

You are the superintendent of a rural district with one K-8 elementary school and one 9-12 high school. Each school has one principal and the high school also has an assistant principal. You have received numerous complaints from community members and teachers that students are disciplined inconsistently within the district.

One principal has just returned from a workshop on assertive discipline conducted by the professional association and is very enthusiastic about the program and believes the district ought to implement assertive discipline in both schools. The other principals and teachers know of assertive discipline and many are aware of the basic concepts and procedures underlying the program.

You believe the district would benefit from a uniform discipline program. The teachers are conscientious in your district, but they are highly sensitive to administrative interference in the operation of their classrooms. Many teachers are concerned about discipline problems and are interested in new ideas. The active support of the principals and the teachers is necessary to implement a consistent policy in the district.

Case Study #2

You are a principal of an elementary school (K-4) whose students' reading scores are lower than the national norms. You have been directed by the curriculum specialist to do something to improve the reading scores in your school. You believe students have different learning styles so there should be learning style options available to them. You are very familiar with auditory (DISTAR), visual (BASAL READER), and multisensory (SLINGERLAND) approaches; in fact you wrote your master's thesis on different approaches to teaching reading. However, all but one of your teachers were trained in and use the visual approach. You encouraged one teacher trained in the Slingerland approach to transfer into the school this year. No one is familiar with the auditory approach.

You want to have each method available at each grade level. You have 2-3 teachers at each grade level. If the new reading program is adopted, it requires diagnostic procedures to determine each student's propensity for learning. The Title I reading teacher knows how to conduct the diagnosis and you believe that she will be eager to do so for all students in the school.

You know that most teachers would probably resist a unilaterial imposition of the program; curriculum matters are within their domain. Your immediate problem is to get the teachers to decide how to organize a new reading program. (e.g., will one teacher at each grade level be responsible for only one or all of the approaches).

Case Study #3

You are the assistant principal of a large high school and are faced with the task of assigning the courses to be taught by the seven English teachers. Each English teacher has unique skills and training. You have the course descriptions and know the areas in which the teachers were trained. Your problem is to come up with class assignments for the next academic year.

Case Study #4

You are the personnel director of a five school district faced with declining enrollment. Due to this drop in students plus uncertainty about whether the levy will pass this spring (it is on the ballot for the second time, you must consider reducing the number of teachers in the district by twenty. You project (based on past experience) that four teachers will take a maternity leave, one will take a sabbatical, and six will retire. Nine teachers must be laid off. Your assignment has been to come up with the procedure for laying off teacehrs for the next administrative council meeting. A procedure is stipulated in your collective bargaining agreement. This procedure is:

ARTICLE XIII REDUCTION IN FORCE

A. Reductions in Staff

1. The District shall determine when reductions in force are necessary and which program areas shall be affected. If the Board has formally considered a reduction in force, it will immediately notify the Association. Such notice will be in writing and will indicate the programs which may be affected. The District's overall instructional program will be given priority consideration. Employees within the affected program(s) shall be considered for retention on the basis of related experience and education. When two or more employees are considered equally qualified for retention, seniority within the District shall be the determining factor.

2. Seniority shall be defined as the employee's total length of service since the last date of hire. Any teacher who is to be laid off will be so notified in writing as soon as practicably possible. Such notice will include the proposed time schedule and the reasons for the proposed action.

3. The District will compile and transmit to the Association no later than January 15 of each school year, a list of unit members in order of their months of continuous, credible service to the district.

Direct participants to use the following framework to guide their small group discussion. You should mention to them that depending on their answers to the problem attribute questions, they may skip some questions. Also, because the model involves making judgments, individuals may disagree about the answers to the questions.

DISTRIBUTE HANDOUT #6

Ask one person from each group to describe their solution to the problem. Ask participants to describe any problems they encountered.

To use the model, a leader must make judgments about the characteristics of problems being faced. Judgments are guided by definitions of the attributes, but they are still judgments on your part, with unknown correspondence to the actual properties of the situation. You may think you have the necessary information to solve the problem by yourself, only to discover later that there were critical facts to which you did not have access; or you may believe that subordinates will be certain to accept your decision, only to discover later that they actively oppose it.

In some cases, the manager's view of the situation may cause him/her to select a decision process that is unworkable in practice. For example, in case #3 let's assume that the principal judged the problem to be Type 5.

A: Quality - yes. "It is important to match the requirements of the course and the competence and training of the teacher."

B: Leader's information - yes. "I know the course description and the areas in which the teachers were trained."

C: Importance of acceptance of decision - yes. "They are going to have to teach the courses, not me, and I have no means of controlling their behavior in the classroom."

F: Prior probability of acceptance of decision by subordinates - yes. "I am the assistant principal and my teachers see it as my job to make course assignments."

The model prescribes AI for Type 5 problems: the assistant principal should make the decision himself and announce it to the English teachers.

The assistant principal carried out this process by sending a memo to the teachers concerned that listed the courses and grade levels each was expected to teach. Within two hours of distributing the memos, three of the teachers dropped into the assistant principal's office and each opposed the assignments. Their arguments seemed reasonable but differed from one case to another. "I don't know how to teach that course." "I've been teaching that course to ninth graders for four years in a row and want to change." "I am trying to complete my doctoral degree and the demands of grading and meeting with students in the creative writing course you have assigned me will prevent my finishing it."

Throughout the visits from the first two teachers, the assistant principal tried to figure out what modifications he could make in his plan that would be acceptable to the person to whom he was talking. He was reluctant to make any final concessions, however, since a change in one teacher's assignment required a change in the assignments of others, and satisfying these three might cause discontent among the others.

What went wrong? *Try to get participants to analyze the problem. The assistant principal thought he had enough information, but he didn't. He had thought the teachers would accept his decision, but they did not. You should return to explaining how. Using the model again, if the answer to B is "no", proceed through the decision tree. You will arrive at G: Can subordinates be trusted to base solutions on organizational characteristics, e.g. what is good for the English program? He concluded that they could. Teachers would want the courses to be taught and want a strong English program. The decision process specified is G II.*

Accordingly, he invited the seven English teachers to a meeting, explaining that there were unforeseen problems with his previous decision regarding course assignments. He then gave the problem to the group to solve. The meeting took about an hour and a half, but at the end of the meeting everyone seemed satisfied with his/her assignment; and, in the assistant principal's judgment, the decision was of higher quality and certainly received more acceptance than his previous AI decision.

The assistant principal was able to alter his decision making process as he acquired new information that caused him to reassess his previous view of the situation. Fortunately, he received his feedback before it was too late. Unfortunately, we often don't get feedback so readily.

Obviously, you can't use this model efficiently for some kinds of decisions and you wouldn't want to. If two children are fighting in the hall, you don't proceed through the decision tree to find out if you should be autocratic, consultative, involve a group or delegate the problem. You're going to have to act fast.

Can you identify problem situations you face in which the model would

be useful? *Encourage participants to identify problem situations they face. Contribute to the discussion. You should mention that using the model takes practice. Studies of administrators who use the model revealed they made better decisions.*

In this model, information plays a key role. If you do not have the information needed to make a decision, you will have to collect data. There are many different ways to collect data such as interviews, questionnaires, observations.

3.0 PARTICIPATIVE DECISION-MAKING IN SCHOOLS

3.1 Now let's look at participative decision-making in schools. Some problems or opportunities for making choices in schools will require participation of subordinates. Does shared decision-making produce better decisions in an organization? We already discussed this earlier in the session and our answer was "sometimes yes" and "sometimes no."

Research has shown that participation by teachers in decision-making is beneficial. However, participation can be overdone. Excessive involvement can produce resentment and resistance. Teachers want the administrator (or principals want the superintendent) to settle his or her own problems.

There is a "zone of indifference" (Barnard 1938) -- some areas in which the administrator's decision will be accepted without question. In fact, there are some decisions that teachers feel the administrator must make alone, because he or she is paid to make them. If an administrator presents teachers with a problem that they feel is within the zone of indifference, they may not react favorably.

On the other hand, if the administrator attempts to make decisions that teachers feel are outside the zone of indifference (decisions that teachers are naturally concerned about), he or she will undoubtedly encounter resistance and negative feelings. Administrators who attempt to create an illusion of staff participation, by permitting subordinates to deal with minor problems while reserving significant decisions for themselves, tend to run into this problem. One of the first decisions you must make as an administrator is to identify which decisions should involve the staff. Also, you must inform subordinates of the role they will play in a decision situation. For example, tell them you are seeking input, but you will have the final say in the situation (consultative).

3.2 Let's identify some decisions in which teachers could, must, or should not be involved.

Ask participants to identify situations. Write them on three different sheets of newsprint. There are three rules of thumb for identifying decisions in which teachers will want to share: relevance, expertise, jurisdiction. (Bridges 1967 p. 51)

SHOW TRANSPARENCY #10

a. *Relevance - a teacher's personal stake in the decision is high (teaching methods and materials, discipline, curriculum, organizing for instruction).*

b. *Expertise - the teacher must be competent to contribute effectively.*

c. *Jurisdiction - who has the authority to make the decision?*

You may want to review the list the participants generate and relate it to these rules of thumb.

We have spent a great deal of time talking about when subordinates should participate in the decision-making process and at what point subordinates should be included in the decision-making process. The question that remains is: In what way should subordinates participate when they are included? As an administrator you have several options. On the next handout are several examples of forms of participation. Do you have some examples of effective ways of increasing participation in decision-making in schools?

DISTRIBUTE HANDOUT #7

At this time give participants time to construct a list. Ask for them to give examples of effective ways of organizing participative decision-making in their schools. Write these on newsprint and arrange to have the list typed and sent to them.

4.0 REVIEW

To wind up the workshop, review:

1. There is no "one best way" to make decisions. Sometimes you'll have to make an autocratic decision while at other times you'll need to be more consultative.
2. The decision model presented identifies some basic considerations to determine the appropriate method of decision-making.
3. Participative decision-making often results in a higher quality decision, sometimes leads to increased satisfaction, and almost always takes longer.
4. There are several effective ways of organizing shared decision-making in schools: *review some of the participants' suggestions.*

To close the session, suggest a way to practice using the model: participants should use the model at least once next week and then increase its use in weeks ahead.

Soon, the concepts -- problem attributes and decision models -- will become very familiar. The advantage of the model is in the recognition that there must be a fit between leadership style and the situation the administration faces. Administrators must learn to use a variety of leadership styles to be effective. You may want to review the experiments using the model in which administrators increased the quality and acceptance of the decisions they made.

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Vroom, Victor, and Yetton, Paul. Leadership and Decision Making. Pittsburg: University Press, 1973.

FOR FURTHER READING

The decision making model advanced in this guide was developed by Vroom and Yetton. If you want to read more about the model, it is outline in Leadership and Decision Making, Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1973.

For more information about PDM, ERIC has produced numerous short, easy-to-read papers:

"Participative Decision Making" ERIC Research Action Brief, No.2, July 1977.

"The Management Team" The Best of ERIC, No. 28, May 1977.

"School District Governance: How Democratic" ERIC Research Action Brief, No. 3, August 1977.

"Managerial Control: A Middle Way" ERIC Research Action Brief, No. 2, June 1978.

HANDOUT MASTERS

DECISION METHODS FOR GROUP AND INDIVIDUAL PROBLEMS

Group Problems

AI. You solve the problem or make the decision yourself, using information available to you at the time.

AII. You obtain the necessary information from your subordinates, then decide the solution to the problem yourself. You may or may not tell your subordinates what the problem is in getting the information from them. The role played by your subordinates in making the decision is clearly one of providing the necessary information to you, rather than generating or evaluating alternative solutions.

CI. You share the problem with the relevant subordinates individually, getting their ideas and suggestions without bringing them together as a group. Then *you* make the decision, which may or may not reflect your subordinates' influence.

CII. You share the problem with your subordinates as a group, obtaining their collective ideas and suggestions. Then you make the decision, which may or may not reflect your subordinates' influence.

GII. You share the problem with your subordinates as a group. Together you generate and evaluate alternatives and attempt to reach agreement (consensus) on a solution. Your role is much like that of chairman. You do not try to influence the group to adopt "your" solution, and you are willing to accept and implement any solution which has the support of the entire group.

Individual Problems

AI. You solve the problem or make the decision by yourself, using information available to you at the time.

AII. You obtain the necessary information from your subordinate, then decide on the solution to the problem yourself. You may or may not tell the subordinate what the problem is in getting the information from him. His role in making the decision is clearly one of providing the necessary information to you, rather than generating or evaluating alternative solutions.

CI. You share the problem with your subordinate, getting his ideas and suggestions. Then you make a decision, which may or may not reflect his influence.

GI. You share the problem with your subordinate, and together you analyze the problem and arrive at a mutually agreeable solution.

DI. You delegate the problem to your subordinate, providing him with any relevant information that you possess, but giving him responsibility for solving the problem by himself. You may or may not request him to tell you what solution he has reached.

A = Autocratic

C = Consultative

G = Group

D = Delegated

Vroom & Yetton 1973 p. 14

PROBLEM ATTRIBUTES

A. If decision were made, would it make a difference to the organization which course of action were adopted?

B. Do I have sufficient information to make a high quality decision?

C. Do subordinates have sufficient additional information to result in high quality decision?

D. Do I know exactly what information is needed, who possesses it, and how to collect it?

E. Is acceptance of decision by subordinates critical to effective implementation?

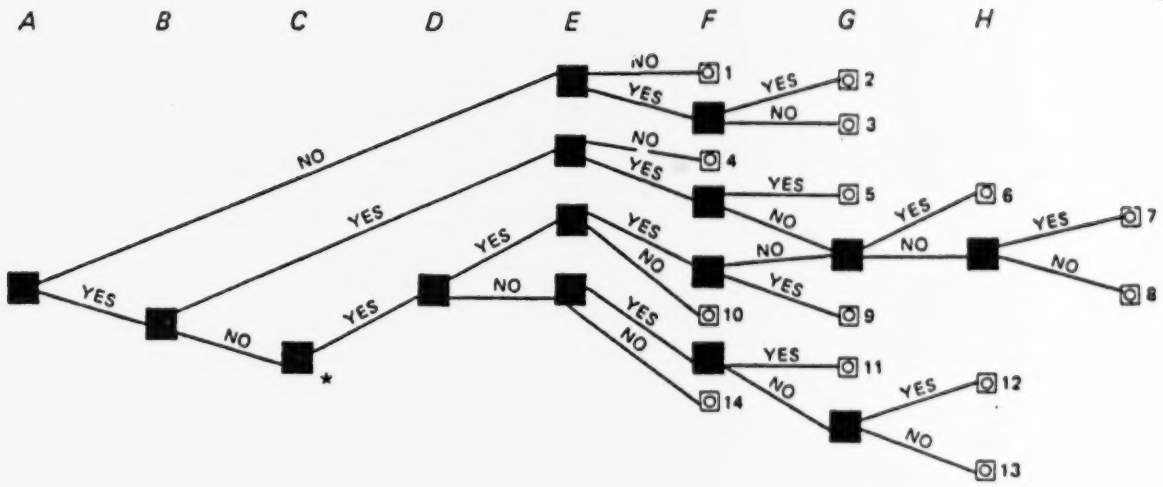
F. If I were to make the decision by myself, is it certain that it would be accepted by my subordinates?

G. Can subordinates be trusted to base solutions on organizational considerations?

H. Is conflict among subordinates likely in preferred solutions?

Vroom & Yetton 1973 p. 31

DECISION TREE



* If "no," more information is needed, before proceeding.

Vroom & Yetton 1973 p.36

SET OF DECISION METHODS

Problem Type	Acceptable Methods
1	AI, AII, CI, CII, GII
2	AI, AII, CI, CII, GII
3	GII
4	AI, AII, CI, CII, GII*
5	AI, AII, CI, CII, GII*
6	GII
7	CII
8	CI, CII
9	AII, CI, CII, GII*
10	AII, CI, CII, GII*
11	CII, GII*
12	GII
13	CII
14	CII, GII*

*Within the feasible set only when the answer to question G is yes.

Vroom & Yetton 1973 p.37

Case Study #1

You are the superintendent of a rural district with one K-8 elementary school and one 9-12 high school. Each school has one principal and the high school also has an assistant principal. You have received numerous complaints from community members and teachers that students are disciplined inconsistently within the district.

One principal has just returned from a workshop on assertive discipline conducted by a professional association and is very enthusiastic about the program and believes the district ought to implement assertive discipline in both schools. The other principals and teachers know of assertive discipline and many are aware of the basic concepts and procedures underlying the program.

You believe the district would benefit from a uniform discipline program. The teachers are conscientious in your district, but they are highly sensitive to administrative interference in the operation of their classrooms. Many teachers are concerned about discipline problems and are interested in new ideas. The active support of the principals and the teachers is necessary to implement a consistent policy in the district.

Case Study #2

You are a principal of an elementary school (K-4) whose students' reading scores are lower than the national norms. You have been directed by the curriculum specialist to do something to improve the reading scores in your school. You believe students have different learning styles so there should be learning style options available to them. You are very familiar with auditory (DISTAR), visual (BASAR READER), and multisensory

(Case Study #2, continued)

(SLINGERLAND) approaches; in fact you wrote your master's thesis on different approaches to teaching reading. However, all but one of your teachers were trained in and use the visual approach. You encouraged one teacher trained in the Slingerland approach to transfer into the school this year. No one is familiar with the auditory approach.

You want to have each method available at each grade level. You have 2-3 teachers at each grade level. If the new reading program is adopted, it will require diagnostic procedures to determine each student's propensity for learning. The Title I reading teacher knows how to conduct the diagnosis and you expect that she will be eager to do so for all students in the school.

You know that most teachers would probably resist a unilateral imposition of the program; curriculum matters are within their domain. Your immediate problem is to get the teachers to decide how to organize the new reading program. (e.g., will one teacher at each grade level be responsible for only one or all of the approaches).

Case Study #3

You are the assistant principal of a large high school and are faced with the task of assigning the courses to be taught by the seven English teachers. Each English teacher has unique skills and training. You have the course descriptions and know the areas in which the teachers were trained. Your problem is to come up with class assignments for the next academic year.

Case Study #4

You are the personnel director of a five school district faced with declining enrollment. Due to this drop in students plus uncertainty about whether the levy will pass this spring (it is the second time on a ballot), you must consider reducing the number of teachers in the district by twenty. You project (based on past experience) that four teachers will take a maternity leave, one will take a sabbatical, and six will retire. Nine teachers must be laid off. Your assignment has been to come up with the procedure for laying off teachers for the next administrative council meeting.

ANALYSIS

Questions A (Quality?) _____

B (Leader's information?) _____

C (Subordinate's information?) _____

D (Structured?) _____

E (Acceptance?) _____

F (Prior probability of acceptance?) _____

G (Trust?) _____

Problem Type - _____

Feasible set - _____

What methods would not be good to use? _____

Vroom & Yetton 1973 p.41

CITIZEN INVOLVEMENT STRATEGIES

Alternatives	Descriptions
Citizen advisory committees	School Board refers problems and issues to appointed local and/or district-wide citizen advisory committees for review and recommendations.
School Board meetings	Citizens can express their opinions, oral and/or written, at the biweekly School Board meetings.
Public hearings Public briefings Public meetings	Opportunities for citizens to receive information on a specific issue, to ask questions and, at times, to express opinions. Attendance open with unlimited meeting size. Could be by School Board zone, administrative area, high school attendance area, or district-wide. An alternative is using a telephone to accept testimony at public hearings.
Board subcommittees	Citizens are encouraged to attend and participate in School Board subcommittee meetings.
Task forces Blue ribbon panels	Formation of ad hoc, short term task forces, composed of a limited number of citizens, staff and/or School Board members. Board defines charge, timeline, and composition.
Public opinion polls	Personal interviews, telephone, mailed, newsletter, or newspaper surveys to gauge public opinion about issues, program options, or past performance. Conducted by citizen advisory committees, staff and/or private research firms.
Citizen advisory committee chairpeople	Regular or irregular meetings of representatives from each school's citizen advisory committees could occur by administrative area, board zone, high school attendance area, school type, or district-wide. These meetings also could be attended by School Board members and/or administrators.
Comment solicitation	Opportunity for citizens to make recommendations without face-to-face meeting. Citizens or organizations receive copy of bill, regulations, or project plan for comment.
Town hall meetings	Public meetings by School Board zone using citizen, Board, and staff teams to present information about school district issues and assess public opinion.
Community seminars Workshops	Presentation of information about an issue or program.
Parent/booster/teacher clubs	Groups formed to conduct special events and raise funds for schools.

CITIZEN INVOLVEMENT STRATEGIES (continued)

Alternatives	Descriptions
Telephone trees	A network or system for calling people to assess their opinions or share information.
Community forums	Opportunity for people with opposing viewpoints to attend and debate issues.
Block plan Outreach	The district could plan and implement a neighborhood block plan to address issues by conducting neighborhood meetings around various issues.
Community congress	Each school would appoint one or two individuals (citizens and/or staff) to represent itself at a district-wide congress to examine a problem, identify alternative solutions, and select the most feasible solution to recommend to the School Board.
Charette	An intensive planning method usually involving a cross-section of those interested in or affected by an issue. An extended planning workshop (2-10 days). Specific group planning techniques.
Citizen involvement clearinghouse	A district department would coordinate the recruitment and appointment of citizens to district or area level citizen advisory committees and task forces.
Advisory committee reports	Each citizen advisory committee would annually prepare and submit a report to the School Board. This report would highlight their goals, accomplishments, problems, and recommendations. The School Board would review and respond to them.
Key communicators	An internal and/or external system of key individuals who are knowledgeable about the school district, kept informed about issues, and provide the district with feedback.
Volunteers	Community residents volunteer their time and skills to serve as tutors, aides, classroom speakers, assist with field trips, business partnerships and parent education.
Community leadership workshops	Interagency workshop providing orientation, skill building, and/or issue sessions to increase the effectiveness of citizen groups.

Basic questions to consider when selecting a citizen involvement option:

1. What is the purpose of the citizen involvement strategy?
2. What geographic area needs to be covered?
3. Who is the primary audience?
4. Who should serve as resource people?
5. Who will select the strategy?
6. When is the citizen involvement needed?
7. How will the strategy be implemented?
8. What are the anticipated outcomes?
9. What are the non-negotiable decision requirements?
10. What is the School Board's and/or administration's decision-making process?

TRANSPARENCY MASTERS

Decisions may be made by . . .

— Person with higher power and authority.
— Person whose job description carries the responsibility.
— Persons with most knowledge and expertise about the problem.
— Persons most personally involved and affected by the outcome.

PARTICIPATIVE DECISION MAKING

AI, CI, GII, DI

A = AUTOCRATIC
C = CONSULTATIVE
G = GROUP
D = DELEGATED

GROUP PROBLEMS

AI. **YOU**

AII. **YOU** + INFORMATION FROM SUBORDINATES
(problem not necessarily shared)

CI. **YOU** + INFORMATION FROM SUBORDINATES
(problem shared — individually)

CII. **YOU** + INFORMATION FROM SUBORDINATES
(problem shared — group)

GI. **GROUP**
(you act as chair person)

INDIVIDUAL PROBLEMS

AI. **YOU**

AII. **YOU** + INFORMATION FROM SUBORDINATE
(problem not necessarily shared)

CI. **YOU** + INFORMATION FROM SUBORDINATE
(problem shared)

GI. **YOU + SUBORDINATE**

DI. PROBLEM DELEGATED TO **SUBORDINATE**

QUALITY

ACCEPTANCE

TIME

PROBLEM ATTRIBUTES

A. If decision were made, would it make a difference to the organization which course of action were adopted?

B. Do I have sufficient information to make a high quality decision?

C. Do subordinates have sufficient additional information to result in high quality decision?

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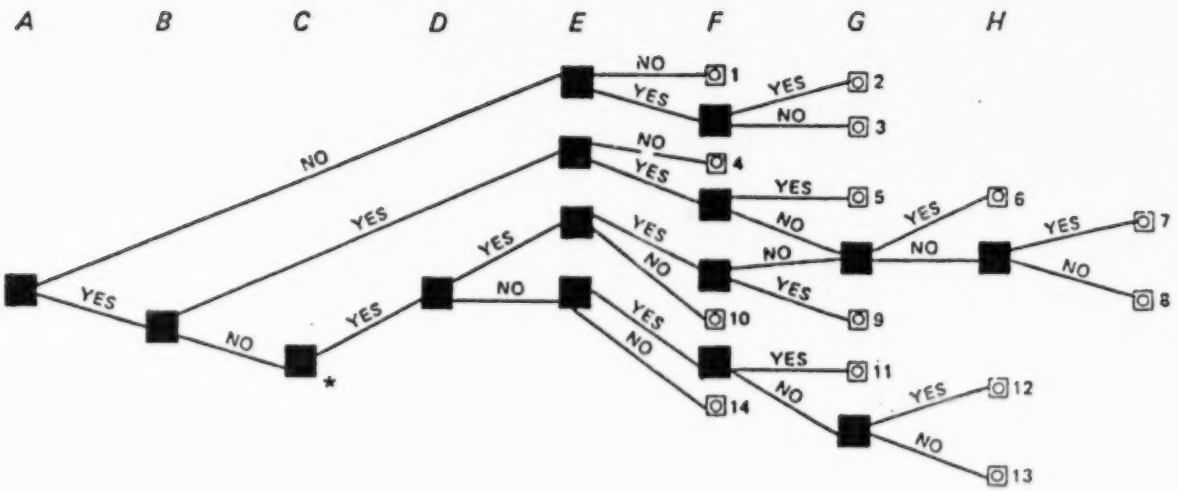
Vroom and Yetton 1973, p. 31

DECISION TREE


A
B
C
D
E
F
G
H
NO
YES
NO
YES
NO
YES

SET OF DECISION METHODS

Problem Type	Acceptable Methods
1	AI, AII, CI, CII, GII
2	AI, AII, CI, CII, GII
3	GII
4	AI, AII, CI, CII, GII*
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7	CII
8	CI, CII
9	AII, CI, CII, GII*
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11	CII, GII*
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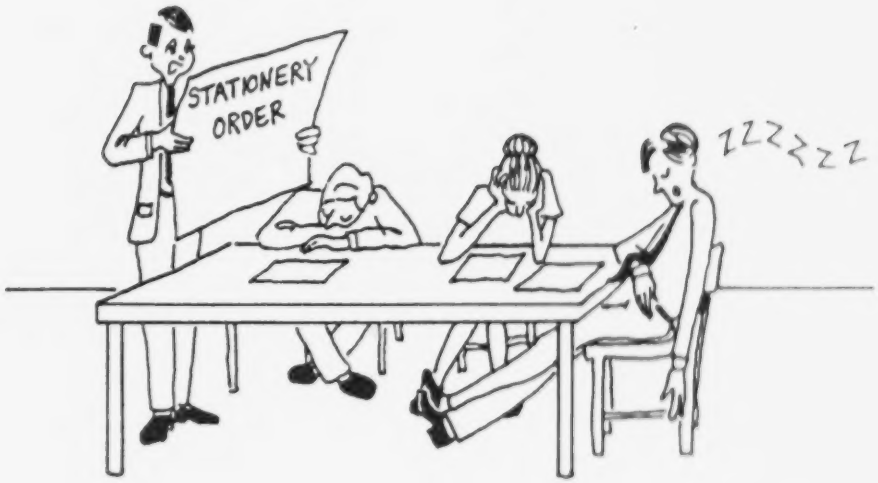
13	CII
14	CII, GII*

*Within the feasible set only when the answer to question G is yes.

Vroom and Yetton 1973 p.37



RELEVANCE

EXPERTISE

JURISDICTION